MANION PROTESTS SCUTTLING of PARLIAMENT

Urges Right Of Electors To Full Facts

MacKenzie King's Political Trickery Exposed In Scathing Terms By Conservative Leader.

Hon. Dr. Manion's speech in protest of the dissolution of Parliament on Jan. 25, made without any opportunity of preparing notes, constituted a scathing reply to Prime Minister King's labored excuses for evading inquiry into the Government's war record. The Conservative leader was on his feet immediately after Mr. King's attempt to adjourn the House without further discussion. The following verbatim report is from Hansard:

Hon. R. J. Manion (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Mackenzie King: The motion is not before the house.

Mr. Manion: Do I understand that no one is to be allowed to say anything in reply to the Prime Minister's prepared speech? Is it the intention to gag this house, in addition to everything else? Is the Prime Minister to come before this house and make a prepared speech, of which no hint was given to anyone, and then attempt to close the mouths of the rest of us? I ask him if he dares do that.

Mr. Mackenzie King: The parliamentary procedure of this house is for the Speaker to put a motion first. Then, if hon. gentlemen wish to speak, they may do so.

Some hon. Members: The motion is not debatable.

Mr. Mackenzie King: The motion is not debatable, but the speaker can put the motion just the same. If my hon. friend wishes to speak, I should be quite pleased to have him do so

Mr. Manion: I certainly wish to speak.

No Thanks To King

In the first place, Mr. Speaker, I should like it distinctly pointed out that there is no particular courtesy in permitting me to speak, any more than there was courtesy in permitting the Prime Minister to speak on a motion which is not debatable. I should like that distinctly understood. I should like to point out also that the custom in the parliament of Canada has always been for the government to give a copy of the speech from the throne to the leader of the opposition an hour or so in advance, and up to the present session that has always been done by this government. No such courtesy was extended today, not even up to the time when you, Mr. Speaker, had the copy of the speech in your hands. So far as I know, no copy has been in the hands of anyone in this house except the Prime Minister and the Speaker.

I merely point this out, sir, because it is a discourtesy which not only offends all the parliamentary traditions of this and the British house, but also shows an unfair decision on the part of the Prime Minister to try to catch everyone in this house without preparation, by the unprecedented step he has taken today. Until I went into the senate chamber I had absolutely no hint that there was any thought of anything like this. The Prime Minister called the parliament of Canada together today in the usual way. He brought members here from the four corners of Canada apparently, so far as one can judge—we do not yet know the intention—to dissolve the house tonight. That is what I understand, that is the only conclusion I can draw, although in one part of his speech the right hon. gentleman said we understood what was in his mind. Well, I doubt if when he spoke last session he thoroughly understood what was in his mind, because usually when the right hon. gentleman speaks as he did at that time he leaves himself an opportunity to back out one of the rear doors or slip out a window. That was what he did then.

Political Trickery

The only reason why I mention this particularly, sir, is that it is so unprecedented to treat an opposition in this manner. Not only does the right hon. gentleman suggest, in the speech from the throne at a supposedly regular session of parliament, that he is going to have an immediate election, but he prepares a political speech to be delivered here this afternoon and gives no one else any opportunity of preparing any remarks in advance. As the Prime Minister was speaking I had to sit here and try to outline a few points I desired to make as a result of this unprecedented act. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I ask you and hon. members of the house to bear with me if my remarks are rather disjointed.

It would have been so easy, once the right hon. gentleman and his government decided on a step like this, to follow the usual courteous practice of a prime minister and a government. However, I must say this is not the first time that the right hon. gentleman has shown this type of discourtesy towards me since I became leader of the opposition. I regret that very much, because many times in the past I have said whatever faults the right hon. gentleman might have— and I suppose I have pointed out his faults as often as anyone—that was one fault he did not have; he was usually courteous in social life and elsewhere. But he has not shown any of that courtesy in this instance.

Gagging Discussion

What he has done from a political point of view is to carry on what I consider unscrupulous politics at this time, by calling for an immediate election without any hint to the people, in order to gag discussion in this house and throughout the country—at all events any prepared discussion — and to attempt to get a snap decision of the people of Canada on this great question.

Mr. Mackenzie King: Will my hon. friend allow me to say one word in regard to what he suggested was discourtesy on my part in not giving him a copy of the speech from the throne? He will realize that a speech from the throne containing a declaration of an immediate appeal to the country was a document which had to be kept very secret. Otherwise, as my hon. friend knows, the information would have been on the streets of this country before it was announced in parliament. That is the sole reason why copies of the speech were not given out before his excellency read the speech.

Insult to Injury

Mr. Manion: The right hon. gentleman merely adds insult to injury. He suggests that if he had given me a copy of the speech I would have blathered it all over the streets. As a matter of fact I have no doubt at all that the press had copies of the speech before it was read in the senate.

Mr. Mackenzie King: I will say that no one had a copy of the speech except His Excellency the Governor General.

Mr. Manion: I have no doubt at all that the press have copies of it now, while I have not.

Mr. Mackenzie King: Then instructions have not been carried out, which were that copies of the speech were not to be handed out until after it had been read by his excellency.

Mr. Manion: Yes, read by His Excellency the Governor General about three-quarters of an hour ago. I had not seen a copy, and that is why I had to ask Mr. Speaker to read the speech. However, that is a small matter, but it is just in line with all the other acts of the Prime Minister in this unprecedented action of his. He says, in his remarks, that the Canadian people have approved — according to his idea—the acts of his government. If the Canadian people have approved the acts of his government, why then this hurry for an election at this time? Why call a snap election on this group of two hundred and forty-five members, or thereabouts, who have come here from all parts of Canada, at great expense in many instances? Why snap an election in that manner? This is simply an attempt to take unawares not only this opposition but other opposition groups in the house.

Mr. Mackenzie King: I will tell my hon. friend the reason why I did not do so prior to the calling of the house was that I had given a promise it would not be done until the house had been called. I would have asked for a dissolution the night the Ontario resolution was put through had it not been for that.

Flauting Parliament

Mr. Manion: Is the right hon. gentleman telling me that he meant to put over a trick of this kind, and that he intended to do that at this time? Does he mean he would not call an election until the next session of the house or until another session of the house when he could put over a trick such as this? That makes it that much worse. The understanding was that the House of Commons would be called in regular session and that we would discuss the activities of the government, the effort of the government in the conduct of the war, and so on. If we had come here, as we have, and gone on for a few weeks, the Prime Minister might have decided that an election should be called; but to put over a political trick of this kind I say is disgraceful and is sneering at the political traditions of Canada and the British empire.

If the Prime Minister had wished to do what he has done this afternoon, why did he not discuss the matter in confidence with me and with the leaders of the other parties in this house? That would have been the better course. I should like to ask the right hon. gentleman and the right hon. gentleman the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe), who sits beside him, both of whom have over and over again held themselves out as the great supporters of democracy, the great believers in democracy—I would like to ask these right hon. gentlemen this question: Where is the democracy in the present act?

Mr. Mackenzie King: I will answer the question; my hon friend has asked it.

Mr. Manion: My right hon. friend has had long enough.

Mr. Mackenzie King: Let me answer it. Democracy does not mean only responsibility to the leader of the Conservative party or to the leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation or to the leader of the Social Credit group, but it does mean that I am answerable to the people of this country.

Mr. Manion: Through the House of Commons. The right hon. gentleman is answerable to the people of this country through the House of Commons.

Mr. Mackenzie King: No, by direct approach to the people themselves, face to face with the problem.

Mr. Manion: Yes, in something like a fair manner, not by a piece of hoodwinking such as has been done today by calling the members of the House of Commons together, calling them from right across this country, having them here for a few hours, and then having them go back to meet their electors.

Political Appointments

And this has happened after four months in which there has been the greatest degree of propaganda that has been put out by any government in the history of any British country. Since the government led by the right hon. gentleman has been the war-time government it has failed. For example, he and his government have appointed I don't know how many press liaison groups, but I do know this, that one of those press liaison officers is Major Thomas Wayling—and I am not saying anything against Tom or against his appointment. However, one of them is Major Thomas Wayling—and he is only one, because there have been half a dozen of them since this government started the war.

Some on Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Manion: Well, since this government started to carry on Canada's war effort, in the manner in which it has been carried on. The government has appointed about half a dozen liaison groups, one of which is working with the Department of National Defence. Major Wayling's press release body has released one hundred and sixty-five press releases since the war began, or more than one each day the war has been carried on. In addition to that, there have been half a dozen other press release groups. Then you cannot turn on a radio without hearing the words of some minister of the government who is putting out what is supposedly a description of Canada's war effort, but about two-thirds of those speeches are political propaganda.

Why ?

Having called this House of Commons together, as the Prime Minister did, why does he not make a report to it, as he should? Why does he not make a statement respecting the actions of the government? Why does he not make that statement right here, before the House of Commons? May I point out that at the short session of parliament held in September the party which I have the honour to lead, and for which I spoke, offered full cooperation and assistance to the government. And I say without fear of successful contradiction that on that occasion we gave cooperation, advice and assistance. Not only did we offer to do that, but in the last four months, since the adjournment of the short sessions, we have carried out our pledge. There has never been a day in which I have gone forth in Canada to make any political speech —not one. I did put out three or four brief statements in regard to certain matters such as mothers' allowances and allowances for dependents, but in that time I have never made a political speech. The party which I have the honour to lead has stood by that promise of cooperation, not only through the short session but since the close of it. I have never on any occasion been called in or shown anything by the Prime Minister with regard to the war. In fact, except two or three times socially I have not seen the Prime Minister since the last session. I say there has been no failure by one of the great parties of this country to co-operate with the government. I say we showed a desire to play ball, but the present procedure on the part of the Prime Minister shows an inexcusable desire to play politics instead. In other words, instead of preparing for the war they were preparing for an election. So far as I can see, that is what they were trying to do.

Ontario's Situation

Let me deal briefly with the right hon. gentleman's remarks about the Ontario situation. Apparently he blames the calling of the general election on a resolution passed in the legislature of Ontario. I should like to ask him what right the provincial legislature of Ontario has to dictate to the people of this country when there shall be an election. What right has it to dictate to the federal government of Canada? Should not this House of Commons be the body which would make that decision?

The Prime Minister has stated that the resolution was moved by Mr. Hepburn and seconded by Colonel Drew. According to the press it was moved by Mr. Hepburn and seconded by one of his ministers, the Hon. Mr. McQuesten. Colonel George Drew did not second it. Anyway, no matter who moved or seconded it, this is the forum before which the right hon. gentleman has to answer—not the provincial forum in Ontario. If he really wanted to call an election because of that resolution, why did he not call it? Why call the House of Commons here to deal with that question?

Another matter I should like to mention briefly is the soldiers' vote. The right hon. gentleman has said that the government is going to bring in by way of regulation under the War Measures Act something which would permit the soldiers to vote overseas. The right hon. gentleman has been travelling around this country for years talking about the supremacy of parliament. The parliament of Canada is now in session; and yet he tells us today, when parliament is in session, that under the War Measures Act he and his government are going to prepare something by way of a frame-up—and I think that is a proper word—to provide for the soldiers' vote overseas. That is what he says. I can only say that his talk in the past about the supremacy of parliament was never better proven to be humbug than it has been today.

Mr. Rogers Answered

Then, he has said that a new parliament would take up post-war problems. Well, this government has never solved any of the pre-war problems; I do not know how it is going to solve post-war problems.

Mr. Rogers: Oh, oh.

Mr. Manion: Let me say to the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Rogers) who is laughing now that for years he was Minister of Labour. He was the man who was supposed to handle unemployment in this country. I say that no Minister of Labour in the history of Canada has ever made such a complete failure of the handling of such a problem as has the hon. gentleman. His reward for handling the Department of Labour in such a weak manner was to be made Minister of National Defence, at the present time, the most important department in the government. How can the people of Canada expect that a Minister of Labour who made a failure of running the labour department should make a success of the administration of the Department of National Defence? This is one of the reasons why the Department of National Defence has been such a farce under the present Minister of National Defence, as was the Department of Labour under the same minister.

The minister who preceded the present Minister of National Defence has many faults, as I expect many of us have. That hon. gentleman was shown up in this parliament as having acted, to say the least, not advisedly in regard to the Bren gun. But he was defended by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King). He was defended by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Howe). He was defended by the then Minister of Labour, the present Minister of National Defence. He was defended also by on or two others, but I have forgotten which ones. These hon. gentlemen stood by him. Why then has he been demoted? If he was right, why has he been demoted? If he was wrong, why has he been kept in the government? What I meant really to say was that with all his faults I think the former Minister of National Defence (Mr. Mackenzie) was a more capable Minister of National Defence than is the present minister.

"Do-Nothing Government"

I have a few words to say in regard to the government's present war effort which has been referred to in the speech from the throne as well as by the Prime Minister in his remarks on the floor of the house this afternoon. In view of the fact that long before the war this government was nicknamed the "do-nothing government," the people of Canada should not have expected that this government would be able to handle the war effort at all well. The people have not been disappointed in that. Not only did this government not prepare for war, but to my mind they have handled the war effort of Canada in a most disgraceful manner. After more than a year's warning we have called up one division to go overseas. There were not enough clothes for these men; there were not enough boots, not nough blankets and not enough machine guns. These men went overseas unequipped to a large extent. What equipment they had was obtaind by gathering in what clothes and equipment could be found scattered here, there and everywhere throughout all sections of Canada. I know of one battalion from British Columbia which was dressed in cotton underwear and cotton clothing. These men crossed this north country in the middle of December and continued across the north Atlantic in the same kind of weather. I say, again without fear of contradiction—this information comes to me from doctors in charge of these militia regiments—that many of these men are sick and large numbers have been sent to the hospital because of lack of preparation and because of lack of vision on the part of this government

No Preparation

If it were true that no one had forseen the danger of war then perhaps I could not criticize. But I find that the Prime Minister, in his remarks on the address in reply to the speech from the throne during last session—I refer particularly to pages 29, 30, 31 and 32 of Hansard—said repeatedly that for as long as five years he had thought of nothing except the necessity of preparing for war. Yet no preparation of any kind was made. If it were not for the fact that this is a tragedy, some of the stories which we hear about the lack of preparation would be quite funny. For example, when the war began a general wrote me—I wonder if I can remember the phrase he used?—stating that the anti-aircraft units had no anti-aircraft guns, and that the searchlight units had no searchlights. That is what has happened all across this country. There has been a complete lack of preparation, and as a result the war effort so far is deplorable.

I intended to deal with this quite fully when I was speaking on the address in reply to the speech from the throne. Whatever has been achieved in the way of preparation has been obtained only by kicking this government into action. The matter of mother's allowances was settled only the other day. There are thousands of widows and other dependants of men who have enlisted to whom this government has failed to give the proper allowance. One man told me that he had been in the army for four months and had had to sell an old car which he had so that he could carry on. His wife had not received her separation allowance. Along toward Christmas we heard that these separation allowances were being paid, but the mothers are still without their allowances.

Cites Many Complaints

Many of the boys who enlisted were on relief, and they owed no gratitude to this government for anything which had been done to relieve their distress or to give them work and wages. These boys had the guts to join the army to fight for Canada; they had the decency to come forward and offer their lives for democracy; yet in many instances the mothers of these boys who were on relief, partly on account of the inactivity of the former Minister of Labour and the government generally in not solving this problem, are being faced with hunger. I have in my office scores, perhaps hundreds, of pitiful and pathetic letters from mothers of boys who are now in the army. Many of these mothers have pleaded with me not to let it be known publicly that they are not being treated decently by this government. They did not want their boys overseas to know of the suffering they are going through because their sons offered their lives. This matter was cleared up only a few days ago. Rather, it is not all cleared up, but a statement was put out by the Department of National Defence containing the promise to straighten out this disgraceful condition. This government never does anything without being kicked into doing it.

The wheat sale to Russia was another example. Wheat was sold to Russia, and it was only after protests were made across Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific that this government acted. As usual, it had to be kicked into doing it.

There was no defence for this country. What is even worse, there were no plans for defence or for equipment. Yet as far back as 1936, if not earlier, the defence association of Canada was pleading with this government to get ready for the inevitable war. They asked the government not only to prepare defence plans but to prepare defences. Yet practically nothing was done in regard to that. That is why the record of this government has been so deplorable, indeed so disgraceful.

Air Training

I have one other matter to touch upon and then I shall have concluded for the present. The right hon. gentleman through the mouth of his excellency has made reference to the British commonwealth air-training plan. On December 17 the right hon. gentleman boasted over the radio that this plan was the result of an original proposal by the British to establish air-training schools in Canada for British pilots. The fact is that by July 1, 1938—personally I think it goes back to 1937—the British had been over here pleading with the Prime Minister to give them the right as one of the partners in the empire to establish air-training schools in Canada to train British pilots. It was pointed out that Great Britain was in distress. It was pointed out that the fog in that country cut down the number of possible flying hours and caused innumerable accidents. It was pointed out that in case of war with Germany that country would be able to send across the hordes of aeroplanes with which she was so well equipped to bomb the aeroplane manufacturing plants and the aerodromes of the British.

All this was pointed out to the Prime Minister in 1937 The then Minister of National Defence referred to the fact that the Vancouver Sun, a Liberal organ in the issue of July 7, 1937, I think it was, made the statement that this government had fumbled the issue—that is the word they used—of helping the British to establish air-training schools in this country.

MR. MACKENZIE KING: I just wish to say, in reply to my hon. friends that what I said in this House of July 1 and which is on Hansard is literally and absolutely the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; and what I said in my broadcast is based on my statement, and I stand by it as absolutely correct.

MR. MANION: I am not going to question that; but if the right hon. gentleman had wanted to be fair this afternoon and permitted me to bring down to this chamber my papers, and I would have shown the facts out of his own mouth. He admitted himself—he admitted it over the radio on December 17—that the British had made exploratory proposals to the government—verbal, of course, nothing written, because there was great play on the word "request".

Quotes Dandurand

Senator Dandurand in the other chamber in 1938, in a speech occupying half a page of Hansard, used the word "request" nine or ten times to emphasize the point that the British had not made any request. But the fact remains, and the Prime Minister admits it in his own words, that the British, in informal exploratory conversations, proposed establishing schoo's for the training of British air pilots in Canada.

MR. MACKENZIE KING: We said that we would provide the facilities ourselves and give them the opportunities here, but that the administration must be under the government of Canada, not under the government of the United Kingdom.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. MANION: My hon. friends had better not applaud too soon. He said that we would, in our establishments here, give them the right to train. Where were our establishments? Where were our personnel? Where were our machines? We did not have any establishment or machines. Look up the speech of the ex-Minister of National Defence (Mr. Mackenzie) in the House of Commons last year and see how many fighting planes we had. We did not have any. We did not have any facilities at all to train the British.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Then we would have been no further ahead.

MR. MANION: Well, I will deal with that too. The ex-Minister of National Defence, in a speech in this house which I would quote if I had had time to look up Hansard, said that the government were so anxious to cooperate with the British—reinforcing what the Prime Minister said—that we were going to train 126—I think that was the number—of pilots here a year, and all we were going to permit the British to send across were fifty a year. Those were his words as reported in Hansard—fifty a year. Yet Sir Kingsley Wood, the head of the air defence force in Britain, made the statement in October—I believe it was on October 9, because I had been studying this matter, and getting thoroughly shocked as I studied it —that what the British had hoped was that there would be 25,000 pilots trained a year. And we were going to train fifty. That is what the ex-minister of National Defence stated. At that rate it would have taken us five hundred years to provide them with one year's supply of pilots. That is the proposal; those figures are taken from the actual record. Fifty years, is it? Well, it does not matter, but I think if you divide fifty into 25,000 you have not fifty but five hundred. Some of my hon. friends laughed a little too soon. Sometimes the loud laugh speaks the vacant mind.

Ignored Empire Need

When the British were facing an unscrupulous man like Hitler; when it was known that Hitler had at least twice as many planes as the British and the French combined; when the British appealed to the right hon. gentleman, in the face of that emergency, with war in the offing, to permit the establishment of air-training schools in Canada to train pilots for Britain and the empire, and the right hon. gentleman refused, he did something which made him unfit to remain Prime Minister of this country,

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I just wish to make it perfectly clear that I refused nothing except the matter of who was to administer the schools and by whom they were to be provided.

Mr. MANION: I will go on with that. The right hon. gentleman says he refused nothing. But on December 17th he said that the proposal which he now brings forward, and which he calls the British commonwealth air-training plan, is in effect merely a continuation of the original proposal. But this is not a British commonwealth air-training plan at all. It is largely a Canadian air-training plan. The British proposed to come over here and establish schools for their flying pilots, to be maintained at their own expense. Let us see what would have happened if the right hon. gentleman had said "yes" to them at that time as I say he should have done. They would have come over here and established their air-training schools. They would have brought over their British young men to train at the rate of 25,000 a year. If that figure is an exaggeration, it is Sir Kingsley Wood's exaggeration, not mine. If the right hon. gentleman cares to look up his speech of December 17, he will see that he himself said that we were going to train many thousands a year. So apparently many thousands a year are needed Sir Kingsley Wood said 25,000.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): My hon. friend evidently has not learned what the suggestion related to. It did not relate to the training of pilots generally; it related to an advanced stage of development. That advanced stage we promised that we would provide in accordance with the wishes of the British government.

Mr. MANION: Yes; and we have provided a lot of it! We have not even got started providing it yet. The British would have come over here in their thousands to train. Then, when we wanted our young men—

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): May I inform my hon. friend that last year, when the $6,000,000 vote was passed by this house, the British themselves only asked us to train fifty pilots

Mr. MANION: I remember the minister saying that, but I remember also that Sir Kingsley Wood had said that 25,000 must be trained annually, and I pointed out last March that fifty was merely a "fleabite". It was not a very elegant term, but I used it. I say that the British would have sent over thousands to train here, and then, when we wanted our men trained, we could have sent them to the same schools to have them properly trained at little cost to us.

Big Opportunity Lost

On top of that, it would have meant the building up in Canada of a great industry for the production of planes, which industry is now being built up in the United States and in Great Britain itself. Here we are, a country with hundreds of thousands of unemployed looking for opportunities of work. The Prime Minister has this proposal put up to him by the British to come to their aid in a time of distress. He refused; and the British then started to do what they did not wish to do; they built up manufacturing plants for their planes in their own country—manufacturing plants which they came over here with the intention of establishing in Canada. I learned when I was in England not long ago that on one occasion they came over here with a hundred million dollars' worth of orders for Canadian plants, but they received from the Prime Minister of Canada such a cold reception to this request that they refused to give any of those contracts at that time.

That is another reason why this government, I contend, has shown itself, in its preparation for and its carrying on of Canada's war effort, unfit to govern.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): That is a strong case for a general election.

Mr. MANION: Yes—at the proper time. I am not objecting particularly to a general election. **I am objecting to the tricky manner in which it is being called.** I am objecting to the House of Commons being called together and then laughed at by the Prime Minister and—if you like—by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe), in the face of all their talk across this country of the supremacy of this parliament. They are laughing at the House of Commons and at the supremacy of parliament. They tell parliament in session that they are going to pass under the War Measures Act regulations for the overseas soldiers' vote. What sense of fairness can we expect in a government which has done what it has done today with regard to this overseas vote?

Unfair To Canada

However, I wish to close. I merely wanted to point out a few of the things which came into my head when the Prime Minister was speaking. All of them are mentioned in the speech from the throne. I say that the Prime Minister, in refusing the British the opportunity to train their pilots here, did what was unfair to the people of Canada.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I absolutely deny that there was any refusal to train pilots here. My hon. friend, by endless repetition of a statement of that kind, cannot give it any veracity.

Mr. MANION: Well, I can give it veracity by the right hon. gentleman's own words, and before this election is over I will quote them over and over again. His words distinctly state that these proposals came from the British informally. He said that they came here; they were not requests, they were "proposals," or some such word as that, which anyway meant that; that they had carried on informal conversations with this government in Canada; and he said that he refused, on the ground of constitutional practice.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I say to my hon. friend that these informal conversations were within two or three weeks of the time I spoke here on the first of July.

Mr. MANION: He says that, Mr. Speaker, but where did the Vancouver Sun get its information a year before that?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Probably from my hon. friend.

Mr. MANION: No, I was not even in politics then. I was not in the house and I knew nothing about it. They may have got it from the former Minister of National Defence, who sits near him, and who was out there about the time, and I have rather wondered if he did not give them the information in disgust at the refusal of this government to give the British government a decent break.

Urges Reconsideration

I do not intend to take up any more of the time of the house. I repeat what I said at the beginning, that this is a most unfair procedure, unfair not only to the parliament of Canada but to the people of Canada, and I suggest to the Prime Minister that even now —he has not definitely said that he is going to dissolve the house tonight but I take it that he is—

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I think after my hon. friend's speech it would be advisable to.

Mr. MANION: I do not mind but if the right hon. gentleman will give a chance for the discussion to go on I will make a speech that will make him think it is even more advisable. If he wants something to hang his hat on I will give him something.

I say that it is the duty of the Prime Minister and his government to come before parliament and give an account of their stewardship.

Mr MACKENZIE KING: No, it is to go before the people of Canada.

Mr. MANION: The Prime Minister could have gone before the people without making a joke of the members of this house, without calling them together from Vancouver in the west and from Halifax in the east.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: And he would have done that if he had not promised my hon. friend that he would not have an election before another session.

Mr. MANION: He promised that he would not have an election until another session of the house Did he mean by that to hoodwink the members of this parliament? Was that his trickery? I say that if the Prime Minister meant to do what he is doing today he meant to hoodwink us and he was guilty of a despicable political trick.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My words were very clear and were made clear because of my responsibility in the matter. I pointed out that parliament would be called. What was advisable to do when parliament was called would depend upon what had happened in the interval. It is because of what has happened in the interval—

Mr. MANION: What has happened in the interval? The right hon. gentleman has been violently attacked by Mitch Hepburn. Is there anything new about that? So far as I am concerned I think Mitch is right. I think he has been right all along, and never was I so sure that he is right as I am now made sure by this piece of political trickery of the Prime Minister today. It is running away from parliament; it is not facing the people.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the opposition has repeatedly used the word "trickery". I do not think that is parliamentary.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): It would be all right in the legislature of Ontario.

Mr. MANION: I will withdraw the word, but I do not quite know what other word to substitute that will express my opinion. Perhaps your honour will help me out. I do not wish to be unparliamentary and will withdraw the word. I will say this, that never in the history of our country was there a more unparliamentary act than what the Prime Minister is doing here this afternoon.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Never was there a more responsible act.

Mr. MANION: Than what the right hon. gentleman is doing?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes.

Mr. MANION: If the right hon. gentleman will change the first syllable and make the word "irresponsible", I will agree.

Democracy At Stake

I shall not take up any more of the time of the house. I am willing to let the people decide. But I still think that in decency—I do not say that offensively—and as a matter of fair dealing with the House of Commons and the parliamentary system in Great Britain and Canada the Prime Minister and his government should come back here, carry on the session and bring in legislation for taking the soldiers' vote overseas. Of course I shall be told: What did the other party do about the soldiers' votes? Because it is already implied that something unfair was done. I was not a member of any government prior to 1921, and had nothing to do with what was done at that time, but even if I had been a member of that government, is it any justification for doing something wrong now to say that something was done wrongly then? The whole defence of this government in nearly everything has been: But you people from 1914 to 1918 did worse —the old tu quoque argument. Have we not gone ahead at all; have we made no progress in democracy and decency in this country in the last twenty-five years? If there were mistakes or crookedness in those days—I am not denying that there may have been because I do not know much about it—surely that is all the more reason that such things should not be repeated now. That is my argument. This is a time to fight for democracy here at home. What is going to profit us if we fight for democracy in Europe and lose it here in Canada? And that is what we are doing by such an act as the Prime Minister is pulling off today. He is endangering the whole democratic principle for which we are fighting along with Britain and France. The whole difference between Hitlerian dictatorship and our system is the difference between free speech and no free speech. The place for free speech is in the parliament of Canada

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: It is in the country.

Mr. MANION: It is in parliament since parliament has been called. We shall have it on the hustings too. But the place to have questions answered is here in parliament. With the parliament of Canada dissolved how can I get information, without any returns, without any questions being answered? I do not expect that any of the ministers will give me much help. The place to give that information is here in the House of Commons. The place to discuss these matters is here in the House of Commons. I submit that this government has been extravagant; it has been careless; not only has it been unprepared but it has been deplorably weak in carrying on the war activities of this country. I say that; and this is the place for me to get the information I want to prove my case, not out on the hustings where the ministers will simply deny that the facts are here.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Then my hon. friend is making his assertions without any proof?

Mr. MANION: I have plenty of proof. If the right hon. gentleman will allow the session to go over until next week; if he will go back to his early affirmations of fair dealing and democratic principles which he used to talk so much about all across this country, and will live up to them this session, I will give him evidence in support of all the statements I have made.

I have nothing more to say. If it is the decision of the Prime Minister to dissolve the house tonight, we shall leave it in the mouths of the people to say which party they want to govern them and to carry on Canada's war effort. I venture to make this prophecy. In view of the unpreparedness of the government, in view of its weak war effort, and in view of the attempt of this government to put over this piece of trickery on a snap decision—I beg pardon, Mr. Speaker, for using the word "trickery," but I cannot think of any other word to express my opinion—in view of the government's act today in trying to bring about a snap decision without the members of this house being given a fair opportunity to get the information they seek and to discuss that information here in this house, I am convinced that not only the Prime Minister but his government will be swept out of power and some other group will be put in power to carry on the affairs of this country and Canada's war effort.

GOV'T MAKES PUBLIC ALL WAR ORDERS

OTTAWA, Feb. 1—(CP)—The Government made public in booklet form today war contracts awarded between July 14, 1939, and Dec. 31, totalling $61,063,456.

These contracts, covering war supply board activities for December and November and activities of the defence purchasing board prior to its being taken over by the war supply board, were to have been tabled in the House of Commons if Parliament had not been dissolved.

The defence purchasing board, which was under the chairmanship of R. C. Vaughan of Montreal until it became the war supply board on Nov 1, let contracts totalling $41,288,907. The War Supply Board, under the chairmanship of Wallace Campbell, awarded orders valued at $19,774,549 between Nov. 1 and Dec. 31.

Last Dec. 8, Transport Minister Howe started issuing weekly lists of contracts valued at more than $5,000 but operations prior to that time were not made public until today.

The lists are made up of items of all descriptions, ranging from a coastal defence battery to corn syrup for soldiers' pancakes.

Aircraft, aircraft equipment, uniforms, mitts, socks, underwear, and food for the active service forces accounted for a great many contracts. Railway equipment for both the Canadian National Railways and the Canadian Pacific Railway constituted the largest contracts on the purchasing boards list.

C. N. R. equipment amounted to $13,847,850 and C. P. R. to $8,591,500.

By months the purchasing board's activities were divided as follows: July $22,360; August, $3,138,273; September, $1,871,487; October, $35,056,796. The war supply board: November, $13,272,966 and December, $6,501,581.

The war supply board list showed large orders had been placed with the Halifax shipyards for repairs, alterations and, in some cases, conversion, of vessels for wartime use.

The Cartier of the coastguard service has been converted into a coastal patrol vessel at a cost of $13,095. Conservation of and repairs to H. M. C. S. Bras d'Or cost $21,633, and conversion of the vessel Venosta into a minesweeper at Halifax was done at $17,865. Other vessels undergoing wartime repair at Halifax were the gate boats Ypres and Festubert and the Rayon d'or, a trawler, became a minesweeper at a cost of $19,592.

Virtually all the orders were placed in Canada, with a few for such things as ammunition and aircraft engines placed with the British War Office. United States aircraft companies obtained a large portion of those contracts let outside the Dominion.

Maritime Life Assurance Co. Annual Meeting

HALIFAX, Feb. 1—(CP)—Business in force now totals more than $17,500,000 as compared with $16,864,000 at this time last year, it was reported today at the annual meeting of shareholders of the Maritime Life Assurance Company.

The Company's assets now total more than $3,000,000 as compared with $2,686,000 at the last annual meeting.

Following were elected directors for 194:—

E. Albert Reilly, Moncton; Senator F. B. Black, Sackville; J. D. McKenna and Red Hugh McLean, Saint John, and W. H. Miller, Campbellton, all of New Brunswick; and Dr. J. G. MacDougall, H. R. Silver, R. B. Colwell, Dr. G. H. Murphy, and J. H. Winfield, Halifax; W. F. Fraser, New Glasgow, and Dr. J. L. McIsaac, Antigonish, for Nova Scotia.

At a meeting of the directors Mr. Reilly was re-elected chairman of the board and Mr. MacDougall President.

JOB HUNTING GOES MODERN

NEW YORK, Feb. 1—(CP)—One hundred high school graduates of Manhattan's lower east side have organized themselves into what they call "The East Side Job Council" a mass job-hunting organization which to date has netted 63 jobs for its members. The council, whose motto is "Rugged Individualism is no Longer Feasible," sends its members out in twos and threes in this new co-operative job-finding technique.

ADVISES LORDS ACT THEIR AGE

LONDON, Feb. 1 —(CP) —The Earl of Glasgow wants a little more decorum from his fellow members of the House of Lords. Every time one of the ministers is scheduled to make an important statement in Commons, there was such a rush for the peers' gallery, that the scrum "was dangerous to life and limb." "I am not lecturing your lordships, but only trying to save you from harm," he pleaded.